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ESSAY ON SCRIPTURE.

Concluded from page 8.

SACRED history informs us, that in order to retain the knowledge of the one true God, to keep it from being wholly lost among men, and to prepare the way for the coming of the Saviour, one chosen nation was separated from the rest of the world, and taken under the immediate patronage of the Most High. It records the origin, the rise, and progress of this particular people, the many extraordinary events which befel them, in the course of divine providence, with the gradual revelation made to them, of the benevolent intentions of the Deity, concerning the human race, which became clearer and plainer, as the æra of the Messiah approached. And it explains to us in what manner these gracious intentions were fulfilled; that "when the fulness of time was come," appointed for this important purpose, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but "anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power," or endued with every qualification requisite to

the great business of his mission, "who went about doing good," during the whole of his public ministry; who devoted his life and labors to the instruction and reformation of mankind; who corrected the mistakes of his followers, as to the nature of true religion, inculcated on them a spiritual or internal, without which no external worship could be acceptable—taught them the most refined and perfect morality—sat before them an amiable and engaging pattern of the purest piety and virtue, and having confirmed the truth of his doctrine, by a great variety of miracles, in conformity to his father's will, and to the predictions of holy writ concerning him, submitted at length to death, becoming thus a sacrifice, for the benefit of a guilty world. It informs us moreover, that in order to give further testimony to the character of Jesus, and inspire us with fuller confidence in the favor of God through him, he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the

resurrection from the dead; that he is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, where he liveth, making intercession for us; that he is invested with authority both to govern and to judge the world; and that he will come again to raise his followers from the grave, and to make them partakers of his own glory and happiness. The fruit of Christ's victory over death is our deliverance from the fears of it, if we are true believers in him, with the joyful expectation of his second coming. And can any writings which promise such advantages as these, be deemed unworthy of our attention? Can we fail of perusing them often, and with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction? The gospel history was written, that we might believe, "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we may have life through his name." If we allow its credibility, is not the design of it sufficient to recommend it to our esteem? Can we be too inquisitive about its contents, or too fond of recollecting the sacred truths, which it contains?

The scriptures furnish us with precepts and directions, relative to our religious and moral conduct, superior to those of any human system of ethics, which has yet been devised? They teach us to love and honor God; to pray to him both in public and private; to devote one day in seven, more particularly to his service; to cherish in us a grateful sense of his kindness; to put our trust in him; to consider the dispensations of his providence as the result of per-

fect wisdom and rectitude; to receive his chastisements with filial piety and submission, as those of a tender parent; and to resign ourselves wholly to his will. With respect to each other, the precepts of scripture enjoin a courteous and obliging deportment; the exercise of mutual candor and charity; the strictest regard to truth in our language and conversation; honesty and fidelity in our transactions; acts of kindness and humanity, where needed; and the punctual discharge of all the duties of relative and social life. As to ourselves, it requires the just and proper regulation of our appetites and passions; forbids the indulgence of pride and vanity, of envy and resentment, of hatred and injury; condemns sloth and idleness, and inculcates the practice of every branch of personal virtue. There is no part of our duty indeed, in whatever light we view it, for which the holy scriptures do not furnish us with some rule for our direction; nor, (let us seek for them wherever we will) shall we meet with motives better-calculated to excite us to the performance of it; motives drawn in general from the prospect of another life; from the certainty of a future judgment; from the nature of those rewards that will then be conferred on the virtuous and good; and from those awful punishments, which will be inflicted on the wicked and impenitent; motives excellently adapted to work upon the hopes and fears of men, and which ought to lay with infinitely greater weight upon our



minds, than any circumstances whatever, which affect us only, in the present frail state of existence.

Are we conscious of guilt, and on this account do we dread the anger of omnipotence? The word of God encourages the humble and sincere penitent to hope for the forgiveness of his sins, thro' the mediation of his dear Son; it assures those "who mourn, that they shall be comforted." Do we complain of the darkness of our understandings, of the shortness of our views, of carnal appetites and irregular affections; that we are liable to error, and prone to vice? If we look into the inspired volume, we shall find, that the holy spirit is promised to such as ask God's assistance, to enlighten the eyes of their understanding, to remove their moral disorders, to renew them in the spirit of their minds, and to strengthen them with might in the inner man. Is either bodily pain, or any temporal calamity, the subject of our grief? From this heavenly source of consolation we may learn, that nothing of an outward nature, how distressing soever it may be, can separate us from the love of God; that worldly misfortunes may be necessary for our spiritual good, and that present afflictions, which, comparatively speaking, are "light, and but for a moment," by the blessing of God, if properly improved, "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In fine, are we drawing toward the close of life, and in expectation every moment of

the stroke which is to sever our earthly connexions, and annihilate all our present enjoyments? What can be more reviving to the good man—I mean, in the near views of his dissolution—than the prospects opened to him in the Christian revelation; of an immortal state hereafter; of a new, and incorruptible body; of an admission into the presence of God, the best of all Beings; of seeing him whom he has loved, and being more like his Redeemer; of being permitted to mingle his own, with the devout ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving, from the whole company of the redeemed, to God and to the Lamb, and of participating in the joys and services of pure and happy spirits, to all eternity?

If these things be true, must we not own the intrinsic excellence and value of the sacred writings? Is not the possession of them the dearest privilege we enjoy? Shall we not express our gratitude to the good providence of God, which has cast our lot in a land, where this inestimable privilege is not wanting to us? We are not in the condition of many of our fellow men, who are left to grope as it were in the dark, in search of our Maker, our duty and happiness. The light of nature is not our only guide. In a way, much less subject to doubt and uncertainty, than by the exercise of reason alone, we may attain religious knowledge. Our feeble powers are aided by the superior light of revelation. It is our fault if we do not know "those holy scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salva-

tion." Let parents be concerned to lead their children into an early and familiar acquaintance with these writings, as one essential part of the duty they owe their beloved offspring. And let every one who is capable of reading, be ashamed to confess his ignorance of them.

Difficulties, it is true, may occur in the fulfilment of this duty, that of studying the scriptures, which may sometimes operate to our discouragement. And some might naturally be expected, considering the length of time, since the books both of the Old and New Testaments were written, and the difference of languages, manners, and opinions, prevalent at the present day. But these difficulties may often perhaps be represented, as greater than they really are. To the honest and diligent inquirer, they are not in general insurmountable. Supposing them however, in some instances, not easily to be solved, they need not affect our peace, or fill us with perplexity of mind. Enough is written for our direction, not easily to be mistaken; enough to solace us, amid the cares and sorrows of human life. With respect to those things in holy writ, which appear less intelligible, we may not unreasonably

suppose them to be of less importance to us.

One hint more may be useful, before this essay is finished. We are not to rest contented, either with reading, or endeavouring to know the meaning of scripture. The respect due to the sacred oracles, would be greatly lessened, were we to regard them merely as an amusing subject of speculation. A devout affection for them will shew itself in practice, as well as in theory. The knowledge we derive from the word of God will be of much less advantage to us, so long as it is not applied to its proper ends; the formation of our temper, and the regulation of our conduct. When it has this happy effect, this moral and divine tendency, that of bringing us into a conformity to the character and will of God, we may then talk of our affection for it, and speak with less inconsistency of the pleasure which it affords us, to be conversant with the sacred pages. He "who looketh into the perfect law of liberty," and is obedient to its dictates, gives the surest proof that he estimates it, in a manner proportioned to its value. "Whoso keepeth his word," is the apostolical maxim, "in him verily is the love of God perfected."

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THOUGHTS ON THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

Jude 3. *"It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."*

WHILE some of the apostles were yet living, false teachers arose in the church, and christianity began to be corrupted. This epistle is supposed to have



been written about the same time with the second of St. Peter.\* The sect called Gnostics, who strangely perverted the gospel, had then arisen. Simon, the sorcerer, is said to have been the founder of it. By them *the faith delivered to the saints* was subverted, and another gospel, essentially diverse, substituted in its place. Most of these two epistles were primarily designed to counteract their principles, which were spreading in the church.

Those deceivers pretended to more knowledge in divine things, and boasted greater divine communications, than had been made to others. The name they assumed carries this in it, and many were deceived, and followed them. From the sketch given of them in these epistles, they appear to have pretended to inspiration, and to have decried the apostles, and those who followed them, as blind and destitute of real religion. They seem also to have disclaimed morality, as needless; and to have discarded holiness of heart

and life, as not required of christians—for they “turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”†

It is easy to conceive how “the grace of God may be turned into lasciviousness.” It is only to declare that the promises are made *exclusively* to faith, and that the believer is left at liberty to discard what is taught by the light of nature, and to gratify every corrupt bias. In what sense these deceivers “denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,” we are not informed. There are many ways in which this may be done. “The Lord our God is one Lord.”‡ To multiply objects of worship is in effect, “to deny the *only* Lord God.” This was charged on those who then disturbed the peace of the church.§ The Lord Jesus Christ is also denied by those who declare him essentially different from what the scriptures declare him, “the Son of God, and the one mediator between God and man.”|| The intrigue and influence of

\* A. D. 66.

† v. 4.

‡ Mark 12, xxix.

§ “St. Epiphanius attributes the origin of the Gnostics to Simon Magus, and says they acknowledged two principles, a good and a bad. They distinguished the Creator of the universe from God, who made himself known to men by his Son, whom they acknowledged to be the Christ. They denied that the Word was made flesh; and asserted that Jesus Christ was not born of the virgin Mary; that he had a body only in appearance, and that he did not suffer in reality. They neither believed a resurrection, nor a judgment to come, but imagined that those who had not been instructed in their maxims, would return into the world, and pass into the bodies of hogs and other like animals.”

*Dictionary, by Bellamy, Gordon, &c.*

[|| The preceding sentence, may perhaps be interpreted by some, as implying that all who greatly differ from the writer in their views of Jesus Christ, are considered as denying him in the sense of the text referred to; but from the general character of the communication, as well as from what we know of the writer, we presume that this was not his intention. We intend not to publish in this work, any communications which shall appear to us designed to de-

those seducers, rendered it necessary for the apostle to warn christians, and put them on their guard. It was then especially necessary to exhort them earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

But what is the faith which was once delivered to the saints? It is the system of doctrines which is contained in the holy scriptures. Christians have the scriptures—can go to that fountain of truth—search it for themselves, and there learn the truth as it is in Jesus. As to every thing essential, the scriptures are plain, and teach the truth so clearly, that unprejudiced minds are in no danger of mistaking them. The apostle did not describe the faith in a creed. Such formularies were then unknown in the church. They are of later date. But the faith—what it is, and what it is not—may be gathered from what he writes of its nature, and of the effects which follow its corruption. He observes generally, that those who call themselves christians, but neglect moral duties; and especially those who pervert religion to the purposes of sin; “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness,” must have corrupted the gospel, and departed from the faith delivered to the saints. The deceivers he had then particularly in view, made great pretensions to religion, but were not sanctified by religion

—they did not “deny ungodliness and live soberly”—they despised those who were set in authority, and commissioned to punish evil-doers.\* Against such he warns the faithful, and declares that God will destroy them, as he did former seducers of like character. His counsel to christians is, “to remember the words which were spoken before, of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Those who do this will not forget, that the faith delivered to the saints, “works by love and purifies the heart;”†—that it is “the most holy faith”—that it teaches to be much in prayer; to keep themselves in the love of God; and to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.”‡

These are sufficient descriptions of the faith delivered to the saints. When people profess this faith, and live agreeably to their profession, they should be received by christians, as fellow-disciples. Suppose their speculative views may differ from ours, this gives us no right to reject, and cast them out of the church. It is not to be expected, that Christ’s disciples should “see eye to eye,” in this state of darkness and uncertainty. They never have done it. The apostles and evangelists sometimes differed in opinion, so that they were ready to divide, and go different ways.§ The like may

nounce indiscriminately, as the enemies of Christ, any sect of christians with which we are acquainted. We are willing to do all we can to correct errors and heal divisions, but nothing to destroy peace and charity. EDITOR.]

\* v. 8. 2. Pet. ii. 10—20.

† v. 17—20.

‡ Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6.

§ Acts xv. 39. Gal. ii. 11.



be expected, till "that which is in part shall be done away, and that shall come which is perfect."\* Those who are most positive, are not always most discerning—they are often of a different cast—the most ignorant, and least discerning.

"To err is human." It is not probable that there is a man on earth, who holds no speculative errors. When we enter into the views of others, we commonly find, or think we find, mistakes in them; and others entertain the same opinion of us; and it is highly probable that there are errors in us all. But different speculative opinions do not justify us in falling out by the way: "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned."† There may be all these without unity of sentiment: yea, the want of this unity calls for charity and the exercise of it is made our duty. It is even "the end of the commandment," that to which it is principally directed. To view every thing in the same light is not in our power; is not therefore required; but the exercise of charity towards those who appear to have "a good conscience, and faith unfeigned," is not difficult to those who have the christian spirit; this is enjoined, and the contrary temper forbidden." "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth, or falleth."‡ For our faith we are accountable to God only. "Why dost

thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."§

But did not St. Paul command Titus to reject heretics?|| "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." Who is here intended by an heretic? The apostle's next words inform us. "Knowing that he that is such, is subverted and sinneth, *being condemned of himself.*" He is one "who turns the grace of God into lasciviousness;" perverts religion to the purposes of wickedness; "makes Christ the minister of sin;" alloweth himself in vicious indulgences, and practices which his own conscience condemns as sinful; and justifies himself under pretence of christian liberty. Such is the heretic here intended. It cannot be understood of the man who serves God in sincerity, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life;" though he may entertain some mistakes, and even great mistakes in theory. Such an one "doth not sin," in the sense of the apostle; "he is not condemned of himself; his own heart doth not condemn him; he hath confidence toward God."

Many things which have occasioned debates & divisions among christians have been trivial matters of no importance. Countless tenets have been wrought up into articles of faith, and made subjects of controversy and schism, which have been mere trifles,

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 10.  
§ v. 10.

† 1 Tim. i. 5.  
|| Tit. iii. 10.

‡ Rom. xiv. 4.

beneath the notice of rational beings. Like fashions in dress, they have had their day; then passed away, and been forgotten. Some now flaunting into view, and filling the church with noise and tumult, will ere long follow them; and posterity wonder that they ever found advocates; ever made a noise; ever caused divisions; as we do at things of like nature, among those who have gone before us.

Divisions have often been occasioned by names, which have given rise to sects. These were found in the Jewish church, and have abounded in the church of Christ. To be denominated Christians is not thought sufficient. Christ's disciples must be distinguished as the followers of some subordinate chieftain. This was early the occasion of schism in the church. St. Paul reproves this spirit among the Corinthians. "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"\* The same spirit still works. The names of uninspired men are used as marks of distinction, and made the occasion of perpetuating divisions among the followers of the Lamb.

It is our duty to contend for the faith delivered to the saints; but it highly concerns us to see that we contend only for the faith which was delivered to them—that we do not corrupt it, by adding to, or taking from it. This

hath been a common error. And zeal hath often been the warmest, where error hath been the greatest; or where the articles contended for have been the most trivial. Whoever acquaints himself with the history of Christianity will be convinced that this hath been the case. Things necessary to be believed are few, and plainly revealed in the word of God. The path of duty is so plain, that the wayfarer, though a fool, need not err therein.†

If the gospel is believed, and that belief leads to sanctification and reliance "on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ," there is all that is necessary of the faith once delivered to the saints. Such believers will find mercy with God. And all such we are bound to receive as believers, though they may entertain speculative opinions widely different from our own. But where these are confessedly wanting; where "the grace of God is turned into lasciviousness," or made the occasion of sin, (as in those who "sin because grace abounds") no such beneficial effects flow from faith. Sanctification is as necessary as faith. Faith which doth not produce it, is not saving—It is not that delivered to the saints. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."‡ "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his works. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his command-

\* 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

† Isa. xxxv. 8.

‡ Heb. xii. 14.



ments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs"—wilful

sinners of every description. "These sayings are faithful and true. Amen."

### AN APOLOGUE.

[Extracted from the preface to a manuscript sermon, from Numbers xxii. 21. entitled "a specimen of clerical chemistry; or, of the art of extracting any doctrine from any text."]

PERSPICAX and Myops, in crossing an extensive desert, had the misfortune to lose their compass; and soon after to be overtaken by such weather as deprived them of the direction which they might have obtained from the heavenly bodies. To add to their unhappiness, they were at a great distance from any settlement, and their provisions were nearly expended. By lying still they were certain of starving, and pretty sure of losing their way by proceeding. After mature deliberation, they judged it prudent to continue their route. For two days they travelled with tolerable confidence, and good agreement. On the morning of the third they found themselves bewildered, and disagreed in their opinion of the course which they were to take. Neither of them was certain that he was himself *right*, but each was confident that his companion was *wrong*. After much altercation, they agreed to balance a staff, and travel the way which providence should point out to them by its fall, till they should meet with some large river, from which, as they knew the general course of

the streams in that country, they supposed they might discover the cardinal points of the compass, and regulate their route. They had not travelled very far, before they came to the bank of a majestic river. "See there," said Perspicax; "examine the stream, and acknowledge that I was right." "You *right*," replied Myops, "I see you were *wrong*, plain enough." "How so?" said Perspicax; "the river runs to our right; of consequence this is south, as I have all along supposed." "Do you take me for a fool?" said Myops; "cannot I see which way the river runs when it washes my feet?" "True," replied Perspicax, "the eddy sets to our left, as you say; but the general current moves to the right. Look off into the stream, and see your mistake." "No river, said Myops, can run two ways at once. I see which way it moves on this shore, and care not what course you imagine it to hold in the middle or on the other. By following this direction, I am sure of arriving at settlements which will be able to relieve my wants, and give me every necessary information." "I regret your mistake," answered Perspicax; "pity your obstinacy, and am sorry to lose your company. But, as I prefer safety to your society, I bid you adieu; and wish

you may become sensible of your mistake before it be too late to rectify it." They separated—Perspicax followed the *general current* of the river, and soon arrived at the settlements established on its fertile banks; while his unfortunate fellow traveller, pursuing the direction of the eddy, was never heard of afterwards, having, in all probability, perished in the wilderness.

The behaviour of many religious sects among christians is precisely that of Myops. Instead of forming their principles, like candid and sincere inquirers after truth, from a

careful examination of the general current of scripture, they first form their creed, and then search the sacred pages for passages to support the several articles which compose it. If they find some few texts, which, either by too literal or too forced a construction, or by giving it a mystical interpretation, appear to favor their doctrines, they overlook thousands that oppose them. It is to the mere *eddy* of scripture that they trust for direction. The clergymen of these sects will preach their favorite principles from any text that falls in their way.

### ON INTEMPERANCE.

*A letter from Dr. David Hartley to Dr. Madox, Bishop of Worcester.*

MY LORD,

I FEAR it will not be in my power to suggest any thing of efficacy to stop the progress of so great an evil as the present practice of drinking spirituous liquors. However, as your Lordship does me the honor to desire my concurrence in so good a cause, I think myself obliged to use my best endeavours, and will accordingly offer some remarks upon two points proposed by your Lordship, viz.

1. The nature and certainty of the ill effects produced by gin and other spirituous liquors.
2. The most likely and proper methods of putting an effectual stop to the pernicious and spreading vice of drinking them.

1. *Spirituous liquors are de-*

*structive of health and life.*—In this respect they may be ranked among *poisons*; for the frequent use of them does as certainly destroy life, though not in so short a time, as the things termed poisonous in a strict sense. And as poisons, before they extinguish life, disorder the natural functions, and occasion exquisite pains and torments, so do spirituous liquors. They never fail to reduce the unhappy sufferers to a most deplorable state, by a variety of intense feelings and maladies, sickness, vomitings, languor, dejection, pains of the stomach and bowels, &c. so that nothing is gained by their being more tedious in their operation than common poisons. Nay, it is probable, that the most malicious invention could



not contrive so great a degree of suffering as dram drinkers inflict upon themselves in their way to the regions of death and hell.

A second evil attending these unhappy persons, is their being reduced to utter distress and want in their fortunes. They spend their substance and daily earnings, lead an idle and vagabond life, and after some time are rendered incapable, both in body and mind, of getting an honest livelihood. And thus it happens, that some die through the want of even the most common necessities.

The third evil is the entire subversion of all moral and religious principles, and the force which is given to irregular and outrageous passions; and in this, distilled spirits far exceed all other inebriating liquors. Drunkenness from them is frenzy and madness. Hence murders, street-robberies, house-breakings, and all the enormous mischiefs and dangers which infest London and other populous places. Hence the loss of many precious souls for whom Christ died. It is in gin shops and infamous houses, where spirituous liquors are sold, that youth are first debauched, and entered into gangs of older profligates and of abandoned ruffians; so that one may call them a kind of schools for teaching the extremest vice, and the depths of Satan.

If now we consider these evils as extending every day more and more, to each age, sex, and rank in life, but especially to the laborious part of mankind, which make the bulk of it; and that in

every climate, the hottest as well as the coldest; it will follow, that more and more dreadful havoc is likely to be made by distilled spirits, than by pestilences, wars, and famines, all put together.

How to prevent this is therefore a matter of the highest importance. It is probable that it cannot immediately be done in any great degree. Reason and religion cannot take place with any great effect, except in the few. The many, the headstrong multitude, are too violently impelled by their passions, to see and hear, and will take the broad path; and yet every man, whether his station be public or private, may, by desiring God's blessing on his endeavours, and then using them to the utmost of his power, do something.

And 1st. All persons ought diligently to watch over themselves, lest they should be betrayed insensibly, as it were, into the habit of dram drinking. A dram is supposed a ready cure for a slight sickness, or pain in the stomach, or fit of low spirits; also a proper defence against cold in a journey, &c. and many unwary, and at first innocent persons of both sexes, are in this way seduced, and afterwards carried on to the most abandoned and miserable state.

2d. All masters and mistresses of families and superiors of other kinds, ought to watch over their servants and dependents, and by all proper restraints and prohibitions, secure their innocence, as far as lies in their power. The officers of the army and navy have perhaps, in this

respect, a harder task than any other superiors; but they cannot deserve better of their country than by exerting themselves vigorously in the discharge of a duty which is of the greatest importance to its safety and welfare.

3d. The clergy are indispensably bound to guard against the introduction and spreading of this pernicious vice in their parishes, and to warn their flocks by private admonition from house to house, in certain proper cases, as well as by public preachings.

4th. Justices of the peace have considerable powers intrusted with them, which may serve the good purposes of restraining and preventing dram drinking; they are therefore obliged to direct and exert their best endeavours to these purposes.

Lastly. The Legislative power of the nation may undoubtedly find out some method by which they, as God's vicegerents, may

at least check a vice of so destructive a nature to the people under their charge; for he who has given them a commission to promote good and prevent evil, will certainly support and bless them in the execution of it. Whatever present inconveniences may attend the lessening one branch of the public revenue; whatever objections and misconstructions on opposite political interests may throw in the way, all those who act with a proper regard to the Almighty and Righteous Governor of the world, and confidence in him, will meet with success and reward from him at last; and may for the present expect the concurrence, assistance, and prayers, of good and wise men, as an earnest and means thereof. This is a general truth, of which I cannot doubt; but as to the particular method of putting the desirable design in execution, I am not able to suggest any thing concerning it.

I am with all respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

and most humble servant,

D. HARTLEY.

Bath, Dec. 4, 1750.

## REVIEW.

*Two sermons on infidelity, delivered October 24, 1813. By William Ellery Channing, minister of the Church in Federal Street, Boston. Cambridge, Hilliard & Metcalf, 1813.*

REVIEWS of publications are too often filled with disgusting party adulation, or disingen-

uous and unfeeling censure. It will be our aim, on all occasions, to avoid these extremes. On the present we are confined to narrow limits. While regard to truth must restrain us from censure, well known circumstances of connexion and principles of decorum forbid an effusion of



eulogy. But those who have candidly perused the sermons, will need no encomium from us; and those who have not, will probably be better pleased with some extracts, than with any thing we could write by way of commendation.

The title page excites in the reader an expectation of finding "Two Sermons," somehow distinguished and separated. With this expectation he begins to read, and is hurried along by a connected train of interesting ideas, till he comes to the close of the pamphlet. He then recollects that he was promised "Two Sermons," and naturally asks, what has become of the second? With regret he finds reason to believe that he has read both, although he is not informed at what period the preacher broke off for his hour of intermission.

The passage selected for the text is "John xii. 37. But though he had done so many miracles before them, they believed not on him."

After a pertinent introduction, the preacher proposes "to dwell for a time on some of the principal causes of infidelity, and then to show that christianity, however opposed or despised, has yet the strongest claims to the serious and respectful attention of all, to whom it is proposed." The "principal causes of infidelity" are stated to be these: "1. Vice." "2. Pride or vanity." "3. Ignorance." The influence of each of these is distinctly illustrated.

The considerations which are supposed to entitle christianity

to serious and respectful attention, are stated in the following order: "1. The character of its Founder." "2. That Jesus Christ appeared at a time when there prevailed in the east a universal expectation of a distinguished personage, who was to produce a great and happy change in the world." "3. That the witnesses to the miracles and resurrection of Jesus had every possible advantage for knowing the truth of the facts they relate, and every motive to dissuade them from asserting these facts, unless persuaded of their truth." "4. The wonderful rapidity with which it was spread through the world, and the unexampled triumphs it obtained over error and superstition." "5. Its spirit, the virtues it inculcates, the character it is suited to form." "6. The effects which christianity has actually produced in the world." "7. It has been embraced, and honored, and defended by the best and greatest men who ever lived." "8. Christianity is the only religion which is left us."

Under these particulars, some of the most popular objections against christianity are introduced, and observations are made upon them, which are calculated to guard the reader against their seductive influence. It will now be expected of us that we shall select for extracts some of the best things to be found in the sermons; but we have not found it very easy to determine which are the best things. We shall however venture to copy the 6th and 8th of the considerations, with what is said under

each of these particulars; and we should rejoice to have our readers become so well acquainted with the whole, as to be in a situation to judge, whether we have been judicious in making the selection.

"6. The effects, which christianity has actually produced in the world, entitle it to respectful attention. I know that infidels have collected with care the persecutions, wars, and pious frauds, in which christians have been engaged, and have charged all these on their religion. This mode of attack is most disingenuous and dishonorable. Christianity is made to answer for the persecutions of its professors, when it is known to enjoin kindness and forbearance towards the erring and sinful. It is made to answer for the wars of christians, when it is known to breathe nothing but peace. It is made to answer for the usurpations of its ministers, when it is distinguished from other religions, by investing its ministers with no power over their brethren, and by rebuking with indignant severity the desire of spiritual domination. Christianity, it is true, has been employed as an instrument by the turbulent and aspiring; but is there any blessing which has not been abused? What religion can be given, which hypocrites may not pervert? Let me ask those, who speak of the unhappy influence of christianity, whether persecution, and war, and priestcraft had no existence before this religion was heard of? Did christianity bring into a peaceful and happy world tumult and blood-

shed? No: it found the earth filled with violence and guilt; and all that can be objected to it is, that it did not *immediately* extirpate the bad passions from the human heart, that many of its professors continued as wicked as before, and even employed their religion as a cloak for their vices. But is it God's method to work *immediate* changes in society? Is it not more reasonable to expect from him a religion, which will gradually renew the face of the world? and precisely such a religion is christianity. It has silently and gradually been operating for good among the nations. What immense and incalculable benefit has it conferred, in delivering so many countries from the worship of false and impure deities! Wherever it has prevailed, it has breathed a mild and charitable spirit, before unknown; given refinement and courtesy to manners; founded many benevolent institutions; banished many gross and cruel habits; exalted the female character, and thus changed the face of domestic life. It is an undoubted fact, that the nations professing this religion have attained a degree of civilization, and of moral and intellectual improvement, never reached before. That christianity has contributed largely to this effect, no one who understands its spirit can doubt. The only hope which we are permitted to cherish, of the further progress of society, of a happier and more improved condition of the human race, is founded on this religion. No forms of government, no institu-



tions of policy, can avail much, whilst the character and tempers of men are unchanged; and christianity is beyond all dispute the most powerful cause which has ever yet operated on human character, and tends to form the very virtues which adorn and bless society."

"8. I might add much to what has now been said, but I have only time to offer one more consideration, which should induce a serious attention to the claims and evidences of christianity. It is this; christianity is the *only religion* which is left us. If we give up this, we have no other system to which we can repair. No other has claims to be compared with this. If God did not speak by Jesus Christ, then he has never spoken to our race. We have no instructor but nature, a light not to be despised, but which casts only a faint and trembling ray on subjects most interesting to humanity.

"In giving up christianity how much shall we lose! This religion, you will remember, rescued your ancestors, and thus it has rescued *you* from heathenism. To this religion you owe whatever pure and generous conceptions you have formed of God. It has placed before you this great and venerable Being, in the mild and tender character of your father in heaven, and taught you to approach him with sentiments of confidence and love. Does this religion deserve no gratitude? Let its light be extinguished, and who will assure us that the darkness of ancient superstition, or still more degrad-

ing errors, will not overspread the world?

"It is christianity, which has elevated our sentiments respecting our nature and destination, which has taught us to hope for the mercy of our Creator, and to anticipate a happier and purer life. To Jesus, the conqueror of death, we owe the sure hope of immortality. Let the gospel be torn from us, and what new sadness and gloom would gather over the countenance of death, and over the future prospects of our race. How little consolation does nature give us, when we commit to the cold and silent tomb the mouldering dust of a fellow-being! Is that teacher to be scorned, who in the language of conscious greatness says to us, 'I am the resurrection and the life!'

"The loss, which we should endure in losing christianity, cannot be expressed. How many minds would be deprived of the only foundation, on which their virtues and their hopes are reared! How many passions, which this religion has softened and restrained, would break forth with new power! How many wounds, which it has bound up, would bleed afresh! Remove the influence of christianity from society, and with it, how much tenderness of heart, and purity of manners, and active charity, and domestic love and happiness would disappear! Surely we should wish such a religion to be true, and should give to its evidences a candid, and serious, and respectful attention. Surely such a religion should not be treated with contumely, and

held up as a mark for ridicule and scorn! Is it possible that any can assail it with *bitterness*, and feel an eagerness for its destruction! What have infidels to give us in its place? When they have blotted out the delightful promise of immortality from the page of the gospel, whither will they direct us to learn this consoling and ennobling truth? Whom have they to offer us in

the room of the pure and benevolent Jesus? Alas! they have no guide and no comforter to give us. They send us to nature; and some of their number have discovered from nature, that there is no God, no futurity, that we are creatures of chance, creatures of a day, without hope and without resource. This is the tremendous abyss to which infidelity invites our steps."

#### THE DIVIDING POINT AMONG PROTESTANT MINISTERS.

EVERY considerate person will admit, that the disaffection which exists among the protestant clergy in this country, implies some *wrong*, which ought to be searched out and corrected. That all concerned may have opportunity to see the ground of division, a creed will be exhibited, in two parts, expressive of the *duties* and the *rights* of ministers; to which it is believed every well informed protestant would give his cordial assent. Then, in view of the creed, we may discover the ground of contention.

##### THE CREED.

*First.* I believe, that it is the duty of every minister of the gospel to make the Bible the standard of his faith and practice; that he ought to study the scriptures thoroughly, to ascertain the doctrines and duties taught by inspiration; and that no man ought to violate his conscience by teaching or professing articles of faith, which are contrary to the convictions of his own mind.

*Second.* I believe that I have

a right to judge for myself, as to the *meaning* of God's word; that no man has dominion over my faith or conscience, nor any right to harm me on account of my honest opinions, nor to do any thing to deprive me of the character or the privileges of a christian minister, so long as I acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Lord and Master, and walk in obedience to his commands; and that any man who designedly injures me, or deprives me of any privilege, on account of my dissenting in opinion from him, is a transgressor of the divine rule, "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even the same unto them."

Now where is the protestant clergyman in New England, who does not believe that every minister is bound to comply with the *duties* mentioned in the first part of this creed? And what minister would not assent to the second part, as expressive of the *rights* which he claims for himself? But if ministers are so perfectly agreed in these particulars, on what ground do they



divide and become alienated?

The answer is obvious: some ministers are not willing that others should enjoy the rights which each man claims for himself. On no other ground can division and alienation take place on account of diversity in sentiment, while each acknowledges the same divine standard. If each one were as willing to allow to others the undisturbed right of private judgment, as he is to enjoy it himself, difference of opinion would occasion no alienation of heart. Therefore, all the bitterness and ungodly contention among ministers, has resulted from a manifest violation of as plain a command as can be found in the Bible.

But are we not required to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?" Yes; but we are not required to contend *bitterly*, nor in any manner which is a violation of the law of equity. Can a man be said to love his neighbour as himself, while he defames him, withdraws fellowship from him, or endeavours to excite others to do it, because he has exercised his right in searching the scriptures and judging for himself? Why may we not as well attempt to reconcile duelling to the laws of brotherly love?

But what is the faith once delivered to the saints? It is summarily this, that men should acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and rely on him as a teacher sent from God. "This," said he, "is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And shall

a man be treated as an enemy to the Lord Jesus, because he prefers HIM and his *apostles* before all uninspired and fallible men? Or shall we flatter ourselves, that we do honor to Christ by the most flagrant violations of his commands in our treatment one of another?

The way to restore peace and harmony must now be plain to all, who will attend suitably to the subject. A cordial compliance with the "*golden rule*" is all that is necessary for the accomplishment of an object so desirable. If we believe the scriptures to be the STANDARD of faith, let us treat them as such, to the exclusion of every human creed; and not *pretend* to make the Bible a standard, and still treat it as though it were *defective*, by substituting human creeds and confessions as preferable to the oracles of heaven. If each man believes that he has a right to judge for himself, of the meaning of scripture, let him generously allow every brother the same right. On these reasonable principles and conditions, the blessing of peace and harmony may be enjoyed. Then, in view of the many human creeds and confessions which have been regarded as having claims equal or superior to the Bible, we may adopt the language of Watts, with some qualification and abatement:—

"Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I'd call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the gospel to my heart."

*Illustrations of passages in the New Testament, which refer to sentiments, &c. of the Jews, in the time of our Saviour.*

[It was by a mistake of the order of texts, that we examined the 19th and 20th verses of the 3d chapter of Luke, in our last number. They should not have come into our course, until we had gone through the 3d chapter of John.]

27.

Luke iv. 1. "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, was led by the spirit into the wilderness," &c. See also Matt. iv. 1.

To ascertain the signification which a Jew would attach to the expression, "*Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness*," I know of no means so direct and satisfactory, as a recurrence to their own scriptures. The evangelists often quoted from the translation of the septuagint; that is, from the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, which was in very extensive use among the Jews in the days of our Saviour. The same expressions then, in this translation, and in the gospels, have probably the same meaning.

The closest resemblance of expression which I find, is the book of Ezekiel. Examples are submitted to the judgment of the reader.

Ch. iii. 11, 12, 14. "Go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, thus saith the Lord; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Then the spirit took me up, and I heard a voice behind me, &c. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit. But

the hand of the Lord was strong upon me."

Ch. viii. 3, 4. "And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head, and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem; and behold the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision which I saw in the plain."

Ch. xi. 1, 24, 25. "Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house; and behold, at the gate, five and twenty men, &c. Then said he unto me, son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city. Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in vision, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, into Chaldea, to them of the captivity."

Ch. xxxvii. 1. "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones."

Compare with these, ch. xl. 2. "In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain."

It appears then, I think, that to be taken up, or to be brought to a place by the spirit of God, was an incident of a vision. The prophet was all this time in Chaldea; but by the spirit of God he was carried in vision "to them of the captivity at Tel-Abib;" again, "to Jerusalem;"



and yet again, "to the east gate of the Lord's house;" and was "afterwards brought back to them of the captivity.—But in interpreting the phraseology of the evangelists, let it be remembered, that our Lord was yet *in the wilderness*, when he was led by the spirit to be tempted. With this circumstance in our view, and comparing the expressions of the prophet and of the evangelists, it seems, I think, that a Jew, in reading, that "Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was *led up of the spirit into the wilderness*," would have conceived that he was led by the spirit, as was Ezekiel, *in vision*; not however into *the*, but into *a wilderness*. This is, without doubt, the way in which the expression of the evangelists should be rendered, if the temptation of our Lord was in a vision. It is also a circumstance which deserves some consideration, that if the instance of this temptation of our Lord be excepted, there is neither in the Old Testament, nor in the New, an example of *the personal appearance of the devil*. The scene most nearly resembling this temptation, is that in the beginning of Job; but there is not the slightest indication that Job saw the tempter. And if it was the devil that was seen by Zechariah, (ch. iii. 1, 2,) it was *in a vision*. Without noticing the difficulties which attend a literal interpretation, let us see whether, on the supposition that it was a vision, any of its force is lost, either as it respects the character of our Lord, or the instruction which it is adapted to suggest to his disciples.

It may be proper to premise, 1, that as far as my reading has extended, all interpreters agree in attributing the temptation of our Lord, in this instance, to the particular appointment of God, by whose spirit he was led into the wilderness. Consequently, whether the circumstances of it were actual or visionary, we are to refer *the principal agency to God*, and to believe that the objects of it were most wise and beneficent.

2. It does not appear that either of the three temptations which are mentioned by the evangelists, were suggested to him, until *Jesus had hungered*; and it was not till *the end of forty days*, that he felt hunger. The first temptation was addressed to this distressing sensation. From the account of Matthew, taken by itself, we should have inferred, that whatever was the great purpose of the vision during the preceding forty days, that the temptations did not commence, till they had expired. But Mark and Luke both say, that he was "*forty days tempted of satan, or the devil*." Yet as it is evident that the three temptations which are mentioned, belong entirely to the last day of the vision; and as the evangelists do not appear to have known the circumstances of the preceding days, I think a Jewish reader would have concluded, that the expression, "*being forty days tempted of the devil*," was but an example of a principle, not unfrequently employed both in writing and in conversation, of characterizing a whole, by some very conspicuous part of that whole. Thus, the temptations

of this last day being a very important object of the vision, and the preceding incidents of it not having been disclosed, the whole was characterised by what was known of a part.

3. If these suggestions deserve consideration, it will appear not improbable, that during the preceding forty days, our Lord received divers communications, relating to the objects of his ministry, upon which he was immediately to enter. This idea, I think, would naturally be adopted by a Jew, in comparing the Messiah with the prediction which was given of him to Moses. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, *like unto me*;" (Deut. xviii. 15.) for Moses was in the the mount with God *forty days and forty nights*, in which "he did neither eat bread, nor drink water;" (Exod. xxiv. 18, xxxiv. 28.) and in which the revelations were made to him, which he afterwards made to the people. This is offered only as conjecture; which, however, it appears is not wholly without foundation.

4. It may be remarked, that *in a dream*, the inspired person was asleep; but *in a vision*, he was awake, and had the entire possession of his understanding and judgment. In vision, objects were perceived no less clearly than by the natural sight. (Numbers xxiv. 2—4, 16.) In the vision of Paul he could not determine, *whether he was in the body or out of the body*; whether it was a corporeal, or a mental representation which was made

to him; (2 Cor. xii. 2, 3.) and Peter, when he was delivered from prison by an angel, for a time was equally uncertain, *whether it was true that was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision*. (Acts xii. 7—9.) If we consider the scenes of his temptations to have passed in a vision, we are not therefore to conclude, that our Lord was in any measure disqualified by this circumstance, from judging correctly of the objects which were presented to his mind, or of forming his decisions as a moral agent. It might have been a subject of doubt to a prophet, or to any one who had a vision, whether the objects which he perceived were discerned by his bodily, or only by his mental sight; but there could be no doubt whether the objects were actually seen; nor was any faculty of the mind so suspended, as for a moment to destroy the capacity of choice, and of moral action.

Viewed then with respect to himself, these temptations of our Lord are considered, 1, as a *present trial*; and 2, as a *symbolical representation of his future temptations*. In this division, I believe, may be comprehended all the uses, which have been supposed by any to have belonged to it, as far as it respected our Saviour himself.

Considering it as a *present trial*, it is to be remarked, that it was when our Lord felt the craving sensation of hunger, that the first temptation was suggested. That the sensation of hunger could be felt in a vision, and that the judgment could be equally exercised concerning the pro-



priety or the impropriety of indulging the sensation, as if the objects which were perceived mentally, had actually been seen, we have sufficient evidence in the vision of Peter. (Acts x. 9—18.) The answer of our Lord, in this instance, loses none of its force from the consideration that the scene passed before him in vision. He could equally form a moral judgment of the proposition, as could Peter of the command, "*rise, kill and eat.*"

In the second scene, Jesus is placed upon a *pinnacle*, or, as it is rendered by some, upon the top of one of the wings of the temple; and invited, if he was indeed the Son of God, to cast himself down, relying upon the divine protection; and thus to secure to himself the homage of the crowd below. Does the reply of our Lord then display less virtue, less confidence in his Father, than if he had actually been set upon the top of the temple, when the objects were as present to his mind, as if they had in reality existed before him?

And if *the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them* were seen by our Lord in the third temptation, we can hardly conceive how they could have been exhibited, but in a vision; and some of the advocates of a literal interpretation acknowledge, that the scene of this trial must necessarily, in part at least, have been ideal. Such a full view, in vision, must indeed have been greatly more attractive, than the comparatively contracted prospect which could have been exhibited, from any moun-

tain in Judea, or even in the world. And if we suppose that in a vision, all which was exhibited seemed to be real, and the capacity of forming a moral judgment of conduct was unimpaired, it seems to me, that the rejection of this temptation discovered a far greater elevation of piety and virtue, a far more resolute spirit of devotion to God, than if a part only of the Roman empire, which was all that could have been shown from any mountain in Judea, had been exhibited. But this is not a favorite theory which we wish to support; and we leave it to the judgments of our readers.

Considering these three scenes as *symbolical representations of the future temptations of our Lord*, the first intimated, that although he was the Son of God, he was to struggle with hunger and thirst; and instead of exerting his divine power for his own relief, he was to depend on the protection and support of God.

The second probably referred to the *signs from heaven*, which the scribes and pharisees would demand of him; and might be designed to intimate, that such signs were not to be given to that *evil generation*.

The third we suppose in this view of it, had reference to the frequent demands which would be made of him by the Jews, to assume temporal power, and to aggrandize their nation, by making them conquerors of the world; instead of devoting his life exclusively, as God had appointed, to the establishment of that kingdom, which is *righteous-*

ness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But it may be asked, are we tempted as our Lord was, if his temptations were in a vision? I answer, we are not tempted as he was in this instance, for we see no visions. Yet neither are we tempted as he was, if the devil actually appeared to him, and he actually conversed with him. Is it still objected, that he "was tempted as we are?" I believe it; but still in perfect consistency with the belief, that his temptations on this occasion were *extraordinary*. He has "left us an example, that we should do as he has done;" but we are not therefore to expect, that whatever he has done, we may do likewise. We may indeed, even in this instance, make an important use of his example; for though the circumstances and the design were peculiar, it impressively teaches us, that however peculiar may be our temptations, by reposing in God an unlimited confidence, and faithfully pursuing the course of duty, we may rely on his gracious assistance in maintaining our virtue; and that, under his di-

rection, "all things will work together for the everlasting good of them that love Him."

[We refer our readers, who would inquire on this subject, to the sermons upon it by Bishop Chandler, S. Clark, and Sherlock. To Farmer, and to Newcome Cappe on our Lord's temptation. To Simpson's essays on the language of scripture, essay second. To Whitby and Lightfoot on the text. We give below the places in the Old Testament, in which the word *נִסָּה* is used, with lines of division between them, by which any who are disposed, may in a few moments, notice the different translations of this word by the septuagint. Numbers xxii. 22, 32. | Job i. 6, 7, 8, 9, 12; and ch. ii. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7.—1 Chron. xxi. 1. Comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.—Ps. cix. 6.—Zech. iii. 1, 2. | 1 Kings xi. 14. | 1 Sam. xxix. 4.—2 Sam. xix. 22.—1 Kings, v. 4. | Ps. lxxi. 13.—Ps. cix. 20.—and cix. 29.—and cix. 4.—and xxxviii. 20. | Ezra, iv. 6. | See also Apoch. Wisd. of Sol. ii. 24. and 1 Macc. i. 38. And comp. the Heb. and Sept. in Esther, vii. 4. and viii. 1.]

### WARNING TO UNBELIEVERS.

"It was my lot some years ago, occasionally to meet a disciple of the late Dr. Darwin. Mr. ——— had drunk so deeply into the system and spirit of his master, that he considered him the very first poet and philosopher of the age. I have heard

him expatiate with enthusiasm on the writings and character of that deist, and in the same conversation revile the Holy Scriptures, with all the rant of vulgar blasphemy.

"Of all the examples of a mind emancipated from religious and



moral restraint I ever met with, this unhappy man was the most offensive. His conversation, though abundantly larded with the rant and slang of the new philosophy, was lewd, profane, and jacobinical; and when infuriated by zeal for his principles, (which happened as often as they were opposed) every rule of decorum was trampled under foot.

"A few months after my last interview with Mr. ——— I was informed, that he was no more! Struck with the event, I was solicitous to know how such a man would *die*. The amount of my information was, that as death approached, the confidence he had before expressed in his deistical opinions forsook him, and in its place a deep horror seized his mind! A short time before his departure, supposing himself

quite alone, he was overheard by an unobserved attendant, giving vent to the agonies of a tortured conscience! With furious despair he expostulated with the man (Dr. Darwin) whom he *now* reproached as his deceiver; and after loading his name with execrations, which I dare not put on paper, he closed the horrid remonstrance in some such terms as the following: 'Monster! Wretch! is *this the end of your boasted philosophy?* Have you brought me to this?'"

The above account was copied from the Christian Observer for Feb. 1803. It was introduced by the Editor of that work in this manner. "We are assured of the truth of the following communication by a correspondent, on whose authority we place the most unreserved reliance."

#### DR. CAMPBELL'S VIEW OF THE WORD HERESY.

[This important abridgment has been for some time omitted to gratify our correspondents by inserting original communications]

THE Greek word for heresy, which properly imports no more than election or choice, was commonly employed by the Hellenist Jews, in our Saviour's time, to denote in general, any branch of the division which existed, and was nearly equivalent to the English words *class*, *party*, *sect*. The word was not conceived to convey any reproach in it, since it was indifferently used, either of a party approved, or of one disapproved. In this

way it occurs several times in the Acts of the apostles, where it is always (one single passage excepted) rendered *sect*. We hear alike of the sect of the sadducees, and of the sect of the pharisees. In both places the term is adopted by the historian, purely for distinction's sake, without the least appearance of intention to convey either praise or blame.

Thus in the historical part of the New Testament, we find the word *dispeis*, heresy, employed to denote sect or party indiscriminately, whether good or bad. It has no necessary reference to opinions, true or false. Certain

it is, that sects are commonly, not always, caused by difference in opinion, but the term is expressive of the *effect* only, not of the *cause*.

In the Jewish sects there were no separate communities erected. The same temple, and the same synagogues were attended alike by pharisees and by sadducees. Nay, they were often of both denominations in the sanhedrim, and even in the priesthood.

But it may be asked, is not the acceptation of the word in the epistles, different from what it has been observed to be in the historical books of the New Testament? Is it not in the former invariably used in a bad sense, as denoting something wrong and blameable? That in those indeed it always denotes something faulty, or even criminal, I am far from disputing; nevertheless, the acceptation is not materially different from that in which it always occurs in the Acts of the apostles.

The word *sect* may be used along with the proper name, purely by way of distinction from another party of a different name; in which case the word is not understood to convey either praise or blame. Of this we have examples in the phrases above quoted, "the sect of the pharisees," "the sect of the sadducees," "the sect of the Nazarenes." In this way we may speak of a strict sect or a lax sect, or even of a good sect or a bad sect. If any thing reprehensible or commendable be suggested, it is not suggested by the term *sect*, but by the words construed with it,

But even here it has no necessary reference to doctrine, true or false. Let us attend to the first passage, in which it occurs in the epistles, and we shall be fully satisfied of the truth of their remark. *For there must also be heresies among you.*—Ye must also have sects among you. It is plain, that what he condemns under the name *schism* in the former verse, is in effect the same with what he here denominates *heresy*. Now the term *schism* I have shown already to have there no relation to any erroneous tenet, but solely to undue regards to some individual teacher, to the prejudice of others and of the common cause. In another passage of this epistle, where speaking of the very same reprehensible conduct, he uses the words *strife* and *factions*; words nearly coincident with *heresy* and *schism*. His whole aim in these reprehensions is well expressed in these words, *that ye might learn in us, not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one, against another.*

It will perhaps be said, that in the use which Peter has made of the word, it must be understood to include some gross errors. The words in the common version are, "But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." The apostle in this passage foretells that there will arise such heresies,



sects, or factions, as will be artfully and surreptitiously formed by teachers who will entertain pernicious doctrines. But there is not the least appearance that *pernicious doctrines* was meant by the word *heresies*. So far from it, that "denying the Lord that bought them" is subjoined, as giving additional information concerning the seducing teachers by whom the *heresies* or *sects* would be formed. If the word *heresies* did not refer to the effects produced, *sects* or *factions*, and not to the *opinions* taught, the apostle would have expressed himself in a different manner. *Doctrine* of every kind, true or false, is properly said to be taught. But no where in the bible nor in any writings of the two first centuries, do we read of *teaching*, or *preaching heresy*. The apostle gives warning of two separate evils in those teachers; one is their making division by forming heresies or sects; the other is the destructive principles they will entertain.\*

Hence we may learn to understand the admonition of the apostle: *A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* It is plain from the character here given, as well as from the genius of the language, that the word *heretic* in this place does not mean a member of a heresy or sect, who may be unconscious of any fault; much less does it answer to the English word *here-*

*tic*, which always implies one who entertains opinions in religion not only erroneous, but pernicious; whereas we have shown, that the word *heresy* in scriptural use has no necessary connexion with opinion at all. Its immediate connexion is with *division* or *dissension*, as it is thereby that sects and parties are formed. *The man that is a heretic* must therefore mean one, who is the founder of a sect, or, at least, has the disposition to create *heresies* or *sects*, in the community, and may properly be rendered a *factionous man*. This version perfectly coincides with the scope of the place, and suits the uniform import of the term *αἵρεσις*, *heresy*, from which it is derived. The admonition here given to Titus is the same, though differently expressed, with what he had given to the Romans, when he said, *mark them that cause divisions, make parties or factions, and avoid them.* As far down indeed as the fifth century, and even lower, error alone, however gross, was not considered as sufficient to warrant the charge of heresy. Malignity, or perverseness of disposition, was held essential to this crime.

I shall conclude, with adding to the observations on the words *schism* and *heresy*, that how much soever of a schismatical or heretical spirit, in the apostolic sense of the terms, may have contributed to the formation of the different sects into which the christian world is at present di-

\* As the word *heresy* was used in the days of the apostles, the phrase "preaching heresy" would have been as senseless as it now is to say, *preaching sect.*

vided; no person, who, in the spirit of candor and charity, adheres to that, which, to the best of his judgment, is right, is in the scriptural sense either schismatic or heretic; and that he on the contrary, whatever sect he

belong to, is more entitled to these odious appellations, who is most apt to throw the imputation upon others. Both terms always indicate a disposition and practice unfriendly to peace, harmony, and love.

#### SOURCES OF INCORRECT APPREHENSIONS OF THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

*"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."*

RELIGION, as far as it is any way distinct from morals, has reference to God. If there were no God at the head of the universe, there could be no religion, because it is implied in every definition which can be given of a religious man, that his conduct is governed by his sense of God's approbation. Of course, as far as the characters of men differ, who believe in the existence of such a Supreme Being, the different ideas, which they entertain of this Being, must lie at the root of this diversity. Hence, if you follow men up to their most secret persuasions, you will find that their notions of God's character are variously modified. If we all conceived of it exactly alike, it would be impossible that such varieties should exist in our speculations and practice. It becomes therefore, to every man, a subject of important inquiry, whether he has not in some manner figured to his own mind a being like himself, and placed him at the head of the universe, instead of the unchangeable and perfect Jehovah.

It is true, that the only ideas

which we can form of the moral perfections of God must be originally derived from our conceptions of these qualities, as we find them in human nature; that is, in ourselves and others. Hence it follows, that every man's notions on this subject will be more or less accurate, according to the purity and truth of his moral ideas and sentiments. For it is only by exalting, to the highest degree of excellence, those qualities which we love or approve in men, that we can conceive of God at all, as a good and moral Governor. Hence, he that has no just conceptions of the true nature of moral excellence, must form unworthy conceptions of God; and hence too it naturally follows, that in proportion to the purity of our own minds, will be the justness of our thoughts of our Maker.

In conformity with these remarks, we find in the history of the world, the gods of those nations, who have had no revelation, fashioned according to the characters of the times and people.

In the rude and warlike ages of the world, their gods were as quarrelsome as themselves.



They were indeed little more than a race of stronger men; for so few and so imperfect were the moral ideas of mankind, that *strength* was the only quality, thoroughly understood and really revered in Divinity. The barbarous nations of the north ascribed to their supreme Divinity the most cruel and bloodthirsty propensities; he was appeased, as they imagined, with the scent of human gore, and gratified with the sacrifice of the most innocent victims. As society became more luxurious and effeminate, the gods were also sensualized and enervated; till at last, even in the times of refinement and philosophy, it was thought the greatest perfection and felicity of the Deity to have no concern with the affairs of this world, but to pass a life of the most senseless inactivity. This was the philosophy of Epicurus.

For these strange misapprehensions of the Deity, there is some excuse in the want of a written revelation, which should fully declare the moral character of God. The proofs of it which are to be found in the works of nature, are not easily apprehended by an uncultivated mind. When God was seen only in the clouds and heard in the wind, the clouds often obscured his majesty, and the wind brought only indistinct murmurs of a mighty power. To us there is no such apology; and if we think unworthily of God, it argues some perversion of the mind, in which we cannot be blameless. That eye must be diseased, which cannot now see

the sun of righteousness traveling in his strength, and unclouded in his lustre.

It may be proper to mention the sources of the most common misapprehensions respecting the moral character of God.

The first source of misapprehension is found where we should least of all expect it—in scripture itself. There are many who form their ideas of their Maker from detached passages of the Bible, without consulting the general tenor of the volume. They seize upon particular texts, and dwell on them with a kind of superstitious partiality, as if they were glad to find the picture of a being, such as they had framed or fancied. From the texts which proclaim the mercy of God, and the extent of the redemption by Jesus, they figure to themselves a God, who is all fondness or compassion; who is too gentle to punish, too kind to look with displacency on any of his creatures, how corrupt and wicked soever they may be. Thus they frame a system from a few unconnected texts, a system in which God is introduced only to make men happy, whether they are fit for it or not; and the awful and pure Majesty of Heaven is changed into a doating parent.

Others seem to search the scriptures only to find proofs of arbitrary power and irresistible determination in the Deity. To him they ascribe unconditional purposes, and to themselves an invincible fatality of action, which leaves them without blame, or power, or accountability. Destitute of that spirit of

devotion which a just sense of our dependence is calculated to preserve, their notions of God's government are adapted only to excuse themselves in sin, or make them presumptuous in religion. Because God controls their fate, they think that they have nothing to do with it; and though in the business of the world they are as sensible as other men, that their condition must depend on their exertions; yet in the affairs of religion they are willing

to believe, that every thing is fixed, every thing immutable, bound down in the chains of an unrelenting fate, which leaves them without the means to conquer or to fly. I am, say they, only what God has made me; I must be what he has determined. But why do they never recollect, that it is his very determination, that we should be *moral beings*, placed here for probation, whose condition must depend always upon character?

(To be continued.)

## POETRY.

*Written on the first leaf of a lady's pocket book.*

WHILE life's swift gliding current  
steals away,  
And you here register each passing  
day,  
May this small book, by honest friend-  
ship given,  
Remind you of the record kept in  
heaven.  
And, oh! may every hour of life af-  
ford

Such themes as these, for conscience  
to record,  
Duties performed, time zealously em-  
ployed,  
Talents improved, and happiness en-  
joyed;  
Errors corrected, sins and failings  
mourned;  
Blessings received, and grateful praise  
returned.

Christ. Obs.

## A PENITENTIAL HYMN.

WITH trembling steps, and downcast  
eye,  
Before thine altar I appear,  
There offer up the swelling sigh,  
And shed the penitential tear.

Low at thy feet I humbly bend,  
Nor dares my heart present a  
claim;  
Jesus, my Saviour and my friend,  
I plead thy all-sufficient name.

Father! I've wandered far from thee;  
Lost in the world's seducing maze;  
Yet let me not an alien be,  
But consecrate to thee my days.

O what is life without thy love?  
Or what the joys, that earth can  
give?  
Send down thy mercy from above,  
And bid my drooping spirit live.

How sad, how desolate my heart,  
While on this desert shore I stand!  
My God, thy blessed aid impart,  
And bring me to my native land.

From thee no longer would I roam,  
But for thy love all else resign;  
O call my wandering footsteps home,  
And joy and peace shall yet be mine.



## MERCY IMPILORED IN TIME OF WAR.

We feel thy awful chastening rod,  
Thy sovereign justice we adore;  
Yet we approach thy feet, O God,  
Thy boundless mercy to implore.

Teach us to mourn for all our guilt,  
May reformation fill the land,  
No more may human blood be spilt,  
But love and joy each heart expand.

To thee, O Lord, to thee alone,  
We look for help, while drowned in  
tears;  
Send down salvation from thy throne,  
Subdue our hearts, dispel our fears.

Bind us to thee with cords of love;  
O may we feel that we are thine;  
While we adore the God above,  
Let heavenly mercy round us shine.

Unite our souls to trust thy grace,  
Portentous, angry clouds dispel,  
Let party feuds no more have place,  
Nor tongues be "set on fire of hell."

May the kind spirit of thy Son,  
Preside and rule in every soul,  
That wars may cease, thy will be  
done,  
And praise resound from pole to pole.

## RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

## LOUISIANA.

THE managers of the Philadelphia Bible Society have learned from the bishop of Orleans, that it was probable, not *ten* Bibles could be found among 70,000 catholics, who inhabit that place. The missionaries were informed, that when the Americans took possession of the country, it was not until after long search that a Bible could be found for administering the oath of office. The one at last procured was a Latin Vulgate from one of the priests. The whole country of Louisiana is in a similar situation, as to the means of spiritual information. The managers have resolved on printing an edition of five thousand French New Testaments, to be immediately sent thither, to be distributed gratuitously, confidently relying on the beneficence of their fellow citizens to render the measure efficient and easy.

## INDIA.

That our readers may be in a better situation to estimate the blessings they enjoy under the influence of the gospel, and that they may be excited to compassion for those who are destitute of christian privileges, we shall lay before them some particulars concerning the state of our fellow mortals in India. In doing this we shall rely on the correctness of the Chris-

tian Observer, as from this work our materials will be principally collected. The account to be given relates particularly to that portion of India, which is subject to the government of Great Britain.

The whole population in British India is estimated at sixty millions of human beings. Of this amazing number not so many as *one* million are even nominal christians. The fifty nine millions are either Mahometans, or polytheists, and gross idolaters. A considerable part of those who are called christians, are Roman Catholics. They have a regular establishment of Arch Bishops, Bishops, Priests, and Missionaries; and until lately they had an Inquisition at Goa. There is however a still larger number of protestant christians. What there is of christianity in India, is owing in a great degree to the exertions of the Dutch and the Portuguese. Although great exertions have been made of late years by christian societies in Great Britain, for extending the knowledge of salvation in India, little has been done by the British Government to aid these benevolent efforts. Indeed in too many instances obstructions have been thrown in the way of those who wished to befriend the natives with the knowledge of the gospel. This has been done, not per-

haps so much from direct hostility to the christian religion, as from an apprehension that christian instruction, diffused among the natives, would prove fatal to the British government in India.

The wretched condition of the natives, who have not been christianized, may appear in part by a letter from the Rev. Dr. Cary, who has long resided in India, and whose veracity is unquestioned. Thus the Dr. writes:—"Idolatry destroys more than the sword, yet in a way which is scarcely perceived. The numbers who die in their long pilgrimages, either through want or fatigue, or from dysenteries and fevers caught by lying out, and want of accommodations, is incredible. I only mention one idol, the famous Juggunnath (or Juggernaut) in Orissa, to which twelve or thirteen pilgrimages are made every year. It is calculated that the number who go thither is, on some occasions, 600,000 persons, and scarcely ever less than 100,000. I suppose at the lowest calculation, that in a year 1,200,000 persons attend. Now if only one in ten died, the mortality caused by this one idol would be 120,000 in a year; but some are of opinion that not many more than one in ten survive, and return home again. Besides these, I calculate that 10,000 women annually burn with the bodies of their deceased husbands. The custom of half-immersing persons supposed to be dying, undoubtedly occasions the premature death of many; and the multitudes destroyed in other methods would swell the catalogue to an extent almost exceeding credibility.

"How much should every friend of the Redeemer and of men desire the universal spread of that gospel, which secures glory to God and peace on earth."

How immense this waste of human life! How wretched the condition of those many millions of our brethren, while their *religion* consigns them to such waste and misery! Wherefore is our condition better than theirs? To the light of revelation we are indebted for our distinguished situation. No true christian can suitably meditate on the state of things in India, without

being moved with compassion for his human brethren in that part of the world; and with gratitude to God for giving him a place under the light of the gospel. If christianity had no blessings for a future state, if all its benefits were confined to the present life, it would still be infinitely desirable that it should be propagated throughout the world. Its influence has done more to ennoble the human character, and to ameliorate the condition of man, than every thing else, unconnected with this, which can be named.

While the people of Great Britain derive extensive temporal advantages from their dominions in India, nothing can be more reasonable than that, in return, they should endeavour to bestow on the natives the blessings of the christian religion. This would be the best remuneration the Indians could receive for the loss of their independence. The obstacles which have been thrown in the way of propagating the gospel in those regions have excited much feeling among christians in England.

Questions relating to the subject have been discussed with much ability; and "meetings have been held not only in London, but in most of the great towns of the kingdom, which have been numerous and respectably attended, and which have, as with one voice, resolved to address the Legislature on the subject. Suffice it to say, that on no occasion has there been manifested a more unequivocal expression of public sentiment, distinguished in an eminent degree by moderation, and supported by a splendor of eloquence worthy of the cause."

The able Editor of the Christian Observer has interested himself in discussing the questions relating to this subject, and in obviating the objections, which have originated in fear that the government would be endangered. Several gentlemen of high character, who have been concerned in the government of India, have given their opinions on the probable effect of introducing christianity among the natives. Mr. Hastings, Mr. Cooper, and Mr. Graham, expressed strong apprehensions of danger from any at-



tempt which might seem to be encouraged by the government, for converting the Indians to christianity.

Lord Teignmouth and the Marquis of Wellesley were of a contrary opinion. Lord Teignmouth said, "it might be dangerous for preachers publicly to attack Mahomet as an impostor, or to load Brahminism with opprobrious terms; and certainly such kind of preaching would not be necessary to the conversion of the natives. Considerable danger might attend an indiscreet zeal; but we have proof that a judicious and prudent zeal may be exercised effectually and safely. The moral character of the Hindeos is very low; a compound of servility, fraud, and duplicity; and their religion is certainly not calculated to correct it. The burning of widows on the funeral pile of their husbands is inculcated by their religion. Infanticide was also practised at Benares, till prohibited by the government. At Juggernaut persons throw themselves under the wheels of a car, and suffer themselves to be crushed to death; and this is regarded as a religious rite, and meritorious sacrifice.

"The discreet and well regulated efforts of missionaries, as they have hitherto been conducted, would not be dangerous to the peace and security

of India. The Dutch and the Danes were more active than the English, in propagating christianity in India; and no inconveniences are known to have followed from their activity. There are in India, particularly the south, considerable numbers of native protestant christians; likewise Syrian christians and Portuguese converts. No convulsions are known to have attended these successful efforts to extend christianity."

The Marquis of Wellesley, who had also been Governor General of India, strongly combated the opinion so prevalent in Great Britain, that the customs, manners, feelings, and habits of India, were fixed and immutable. He said, "he had employed the missionaries in the education of youth, and in translations, and more particularly in translating the scriptures into the eastern languages. He had issued no order for the dissemination of these translations among the natives. He had thought it his duty to have the scriptures translated into the languages of the east, and to give the learned natives, employed in the translations, access to the sacred fountains of divine truth. He thought a christian Governor could do no less, and that a British Governor could do no more."

#### *Pleasing intelligence in regard to duelling.*

We feel a pleasure in stating, that some recent events afford encouragement, that the abominable practice of duelling will soon be placed on a level with other forms of murder. In Great Britain four officers of the army were recently sentenced to suffer death as murderers, for the part they took in a duel, in which Lieut. Blundell of the tenth regiment was killed. The Prince Regent granted them the royal pardon, but accompanied the pardon with strong expressions of disapprobation. The Duke of York, who is Commander in Chief of the army, issued general orders on the occasion, which were well calculated to suppress the practice of duelling among the officers of the army. While he announced the pardon of the convicts, he

also announced the "highest displeasure of the Prince Regent, for conduct so *unmilitary* and *disgraceful*; and notified them that they were no longer officers in his Majesty's service." And one of them, who was supposed to be the principal instigator of the duel, was declared to be "incapable of ever serving his Majesty in any military capacity." The following is the last paragraph.

"The Commander in Chief directs, that this order shall be entered in the Orderly Books, and read at the head of every regiment and corps in the service. He hopes it will prove a useful and impressive lesson to the young officers of the army, and a warning to them of the fatal consequences of allowing themselves to be

misled by erroneous notions and *false principles* of honor; which, when rightly understood, and leading to its legitimate object, is the brightest gem in the character of a soldier."

A glimmering of light has also appeared in our own country on the same subject.

"Walter Folger, Esq. having been found guilty of sending a challenge to Mr. A. Nesbit, his son-in-law, to fight a duel, the Constitutional Court at Columbia, (S. C.) lately sentenced him to

pay a fine of three hundred dollars, to be imprisoned two months, and to enter into a recognizance in the sum of one thousand dollars to keep the peace for six years."

It is hoped that in a few years more the practice of duelling among gentlemen, will become as *disreputable*, as it now would be for farmers to decide their disputes with axes or pitchforks. Nothing, it is believed, but the grossest delusion renders it otherwise at the present day.

### *Many small donations amount to a great sum.*

THE following curious calculation is taken from an interesting address, published by the Edinburgh Auxiliary Missionary Society. The calculation may be usefully applied on the various occasions of contribution for benevolent purposes.

"Suppose that the inhabitants of this city and its vicinity amount to a hundred thousand. Let but *one* in *ten* of this number be found able and willing to contribute *one* penny sterling a week, and the annual amount will be two thousand one hundred and sixty six pounds three shillings and four pence. If but one in twenty give so

trifling a sum, still the yearly amount will be one thousand and eighty three pounds one shilling and eight pence. One penny sterling a week, for one in *twenty* of the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland would yield SIXTY FIVE THOUSAND POUNDS A YEAR; and this is more than six times the amount of the annual contributions to the funds of the London Missionary Society. It appears then, that hitherto there has not been at an average, more than *one* out of a *hundred and twenty*, who has paid so much as *one* penny sterling a week into the funds of this so much celebrated society!"

### *Ordinations.*

JANUARY 19, 1814, Rev. Thomas B. Gannett, as Pastor of the church in Cambridgeport. Introductory prayer by Rev. Pres. Kirkland; Sermon by Rev. Dr. Holmes, of Cambridge; ordaining prayer by Rev. Dr. Lathrop, of Boston; Charge by Rev. Dr. Osgood, of Medford; Right Hand by Rev. Mr. Lowell, of Boston; concluding prayer by Rev. Dr. Porter, of Roxbury.

January 26, 1814, Rev. Nathaniel Whitman, as Pastor of the church in Billerica, and colleague with the Rev. Dr. Cumings. Introductory prayer by Rev. Pres. Kirkland; Sermon by Rev. Mr. Flint, of Bridgewater; ordaining prayer by Rev. Mr. Ripley, of Concord; Charge by Rev. Dr. Cumings, of Billerica; Right Hand by Rev. Mr. Stearns, of Bradford; concluding prayer by Rev. Mr. Thayer, of Lancaster.

### *Candidates for the ministry in Cambridge and its vicinity.*

Rev. Mr. Leonard, Boston.  
Mr. William Popkin, Malden,  
Mr. Samuel Sewall, Cambridge.  
Mr. John White, do.  
Mr. Joseph Field, Boston.

Mr. Timothy Hilliard, Cambridge.  
Mr. Lemuel Capen, do.  
Mr. John E. Abbot, Boston.  
Mr. Joseph Haven, Cambridge.  
Mr. David Damon, do.  
Mr. Hiram Weston, Duxbury.

N. B. The piece on "Serious preaching" will be continued in the next number.